

Washington State University Extension
Master Gardener Program
Handbook

***Statewide Policies and Procedures
For Program Coordinators and Volunteers***

September 17, 2008

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the Washington State University Extension Master Gardener Program, founders of the nationally and internationally acclaimed Master Gardener movement! Serving the residents of Washington since 1973, Washington State University Extension Master Gardeners are university-trained volunteers who provide “the face of Washington State University” across our state. WSU Extension Master Gardeners serve as volunteer community educators through the WSU Extension office in their county, providing research-based information about gardening and horticulture topics.

This manual is intended to provide general answers for WSU Extension faculty, staff, and Master Gardener Volunteers. Specific program requirements vary slightly by county. Your local WSU Extension Educator or Program Coordinator may have additional guidelines or policies for you.

Volunteers are valued partners whose service is vital to the educational mission of Washington State University. Thank you very much for your interest, your participation, and the contributions you make to your local community.



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WSU Extension Master Gardener Program: Volunteer Community Educators – cultivating plants, people, and communities since 1973.

Chapter 1: Washington State University Extension

What is Washington State University Extension?

Washington State University (WSU) Extension brings the university to people in their own communities. It “extends” the knowledge of the land-grant university, which in this state is Washington State University, beyond the borders of the campus to the people of the state. Each WSU Extension office works in partnership with the County Government and/or Tribal Government in helping people and communities thrive.

Mission Statement, Vision, and Purpose of WSU Extension

Mission Statement: “Washington State University Extension engages people, organizations, and communities to advance economic well-being and quality of life by connecting them to the knowledge base of the university and by fostering inquiry, learning, and the application of research.

Washington State University Extension is the world-class outreach and engagement enterprise of the university serving the people of Washington and the global society in which we live. Our close relationships within communities allow us to deliver personalized education that challenges and inspires individuals to achieve their highest goals. We create, interpret, and deliver knowledge to society that improves the health and well-being of individuals and the environment, fuels our state’s economy, and enhances and enriches our communities.

Washington State University Extension is important to the state because...

- We work in partnership with communities to identify issues that the university’s research and knowledge bases can address. Application of new knowledge and technologies contributes to the economic and cultural vitality of the state.
- As part of Washington State University, we provide unbiased, research-based information that gives people the knowledge to improve their health and livelihoods.
- We deliver educational programs that are adapted to critical needs in the community. As a result, outcomes are long-lasting and have deep impact on the health and well-being of all citizens and the environments in which they live.
- Our presence in every county enables community members to come to WSU directly with their issues. The assistance that they receive helps them improve their lives.
- Our strong local partnerships allow us to leverage human and capital resources in order to affect action on critical issues.

WSU Extension Funding Sources Include:

- Washington State through Washington State University;
- County government as determined by county commissioners and council members (portion of salary of WSU faculty, office support staff and facilities, operating supplies and equipment, and some salaries for support staff);
- The United States Department of Agriculture through the Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service (USDA-CSREES);
- Grants and contracts from both the public and the private sectors;
- Some Master Gardener organizations (foundations, associations, etc);
- Fees for service;
- Donor gifts and bequests.

Chapter 2: Washington State University Extension Master Gardener Program

Purpose/Background

The purpose of the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program is to provide public education in gardening and environmental stewardship based on researched-based information from WSU Extension and other university systems. Volunteers are trained by WSU faculty and staff to be community educators about issues of importance in their local communities such as enhancing natural resources and environmental stewardship, sustaining vibrant communities, and improving health and wellness of Washington residents. The Master Gardener title was derived from Germany's "gartenmeisters," who were highly respected horticulturists in their communities. That is the legacy to which WSU Extension and Master Gardeners must aspire.

The Master Gardener Program started when WSU Extension faculty in King and Pierce counties began training volunteers to serve as WSU Extension Master Gardeners in January of 1973. Little did they realize they would launch an entire "Master Gardener Movement" which would spread across the nation and overseas, making it a historic, sociological "grassroots" movement with widespread impact. It is considered a premier program within Washington State University, being the only uniquely WSU program with such widespread adoption and impact.

WSU Extension Master Gardener Program: Volunteer Community Educators – cultivating plants, people and communities since 1973.

Organizational Structure

Guidance for the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program is provided by the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program Leader in close cooperation with the Master Gardener Leadership Advisory Council (MGLAC) (<http://mastergardener.wsu.edu/mgleadershipsadvisorycouncil.html>). This statewide Advisory Council is the official mechanism for both gathering and dispensing information relating to the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program across the state. The WSU County Extension office supervises the Master Gardener Volunteers at the local level.

Most WSU Extension County offices are organized in the following manner:

- County Extension Director – leadership and supervision of all faculty and staff in the Extension office;
- County Extension Educator – leadership for educational program(s) and supervision of the county staff and volunteers related to each program;
- County Extension Program Coordinator – coordination and management of specific program and volunteers.

Volunteers in some counties have formed Master Gardener (MG) organizations called Foundations or Associations to work in partnership with the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program.

For more information about MG organizations that partner with the Extension Master Gardener Program, see chapter 5, page 14.

Important Qualities of the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program

Having a Clear Purpose. The mission of the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program is education. Volunteers are trained to be community educators. When considering a new project, Master Gardener Program staff and volunteers must ask: Is there a strong educational component to this project?

Serving Diverse Audiences. Our communities represent a diversified population. The land-grant university system was built on the principles that all people should have access to education and that land-grant universities “should serve the needs of the common person.” Master Gardeners must continue that tradition, by having diversity represented in the volunteers and staff who offer the programs and that the programs are available to and serve all residents.

Addressing Critical Issues. As a public good supported by taxpayers, “Master Gardening” must be relevant to the larger issues facing society – protecting environmental quality, ending hunger, building strong and safe neighborhoods, and growing healthy children. The WSU Extension Strategic Goals is located at <http://ext.wsu.edu/framework/frameworkbrief.pdf> .

Publicizing Success. WSU Extension and Master Gardener Volunteers must let residents of Washington State, decision makers, businesses, and, last but not least, the university community know about the positive value of the work they do. Each local program must look for ways to illustrate the relevance of their work to the goals of funding decision-makers.

Chapter 3: Becoming a WSU Extension Master Gardener, and Retaining Certification

Requirements

Applicants to the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program must:

- Have a strong volunteer ethic and experience in gardening;
- Commit to attend the WSU Extension Master Gardener Basic Training course and complete all assignments and exams;
- Be available to perform volunteer work at times needed by the county WSU Extension Master Gardener Program;
- Agree to donate the number of volunteer hours required by the county WSU Extension Master Gardener Program;
- Complete required Volunteer Time Reports each month.

The Application and Enrollment Process

Step 1: Contact the WSU Extension office in county of residence about dates for submitting the Master Gardener Volunteer application and the basic training schedule. Training times vary by county.

Step 2: Complete the WSU Extension Volunteer Application Form and a county WSU Extension Master Gardener Program Enrollment Form.

Step 3: Complete a Criminal History Disclosure Form in accordance with Child/Adult Abuse Information Act RCW 43.43.830 through 43.43.845. **All volunteers for any WSU Extension program are screened in this fashion.** Volunteers will be asked to provide their correct name, date of birth, and driver's license number so that staff can access the online services of the Washington State Patrol. All information is kept confidential and in a secure location.

Step 4: Submit application forms to the Master Gardener Program Coordinator in county of residence and ask when you will be notified of enrollment.

Basic Training

Volunteers must apply and be fully enrolled in their county WSU Extension Master Gardener Program prior to the start of the WSU Extension Master Gardener Basic Training course. The WSU Extension Master Gardener Basic Training consists of a minimum of 50 hours of instruction. Program staff in some counties may require additional classes.

A county-specific training fee is due prior to the first class unless other arrangements are made. No successful applicants to the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program will be excluded because they cannot afford the training fees. Persons of limited financial means can request a scholarship to cover all or part of the fees. The WSU Extension faculty or staff member supervising the local program will make the determination of financial need.

Some counties allow a limited number of individuals to audit the WSU Extension Master Gardener Basic Training course without making a volunteer commitment by paying the full cost of training materials and other local fees. The number of audits is limited and varies by county. Persons who audit the training course DO NOT receive the title of "WSU Extension Master Gardener" or of "WSU Master Gardener."

Volunteers are expected to attend **all** training sessions. The training sessions are intensive and expose the volunteer to a great deal of information during each class. The program is intended to familiarize volunteers with reference material resources available from Washington State University. **You are not**

expected to memorize the information. It is more important to learn research skills and where to find information than to memorize large amounts of information.

The WSU Extension Master Gardener Basic Training course consists of a balanced, integrated, practical course in home horticulture. This includes an introduction to plant science; soils and soil amendments; insect, disease, and weed management; sustainable garden management; integrated pest management (IPM); pesticide safety; and plant problem diagnosis. These topics are applied to specific plant systems such as lawns and turf, landscape trees and shrubs, perennials, vegetables, and fruits. A combination of lecture, problem-solving, hands-on, field trips, and experiential learning methods may be used during the training sessions. The exact teaching format may vary by county depending on the available resources and instructors.

In many counties, a mentor, who is an experienced Master Gardener, will be on hand to help with a designated volunteer. Mentors will assist volunteers throughout training and as they start Master Gardener volunteer work. This “mentor option” may not be available in all counties.

Internship

After completing the WSU Extension Master Gardener Basic Training course, volunteers complete a volunteer internship for a county-specific number of volunteer hours within a prescribed timeframe. The statewide minimum volunteer internship is 40 hours to be completed within a year after completing WSU Extension Master Gardener Basic Training. Most of that time will be spent in educational outreach activities such as staffing plant clinics, working in a demo garden, teaching, or giving presentations and demonstrations. The county Extension Educator or the local Program Coordinator must approve volunteer projects done by WSU Extension Master Gardeners.

WSU Extension Master Gardener Certification

Upon completion of the Basic Training and Internship, a person becomes a certified WSU Extension Master Gardener. Each will receive a WSU Extension Master Gardener name badge and a certificate of completion.

Retaining Certification

Active Master Gardener Volunteers will be asked each year to make a commitment for continued participation in the program by:

- Returning a county reapplication or update form
- Volunteering a minimum of 25 hours of approved community service.
- Acquiring Continuing Education (CE) credits. The suggested minimum is 10 hours per year.
- Returning required volunteer time reports each month.

Local WSU Extension Master Gardener Program Coordinators and/or Extension Educators determine the number of hours of volunteer service and Continuing Education required for continued certification.

Chapter 4: Volunteer Master Gardener Program Policies & Procedures

Affirmative Action Policy

WSU Extension programs and policies are consistent with federal and state laws, regulations, and applicable Executive Orders regarding civil rights, equal opportunity, and Affirmative Action. Washington State University prohibits discrimination on the basis of race; sex; religion; age; color; creed; national or ethnic origin; physical, mental, or sensory disability; marital status; sexual orientation; and status as a Vietnam-era or disabled veteran. Concerns or evidence of non-compliance may be reported to your local WSU Extension office or the Washington State University Center for Human Rights on the WSU Pullman Campus, (509) 335-8288 or www.chr.wsu.edu. Because WSU Extension receives both federal and state funds, WSU Master Gardener Volunteers are required to participate in the collection of contact information to verify lawful compliance with Affirmative Action laws.

Volunteer Service Hours

Each county program offers a variety of ways to fulfill volunteer service requirements for certification by WSU as a Master Gardener. The opportunities vary somewhat from county to county and this is one of the strengths of the WSU Extension MG Program - it is state supported, but locally relevant. Volunteer service hours may be earned through *educational outreach* or *program support* functions.

The county Master Gardener Program Coordinator and/or the Extension Educator determines what qualifies as volunteer service hours in each county. He or she may, for instance, require a minimum number of education outreach hours and let the volunteer decide how to fulfill the remaining required hours through outreach or program support.

Examples of Educational Outreach:

- Plant clinics - Some counties have Plant Clinics in their Extension office. Clientele come in or call and talk to a Master Gardener about garden and landscape plant and pest management.
- Classes, workshops and seminars - Master Gardeners may give talks in the community about horticultural topics or teach Extension-sponsored gardening classes.
- Garden tours – Master Gardeners may lead tours of gardens and parks to teach about plant materials, gardening practices and/or problem diagnosis.
- Demonstration gardens - The use of demonstration gardens and related chores varies by county and must be part of the educational outreach in each county.
- Exhibits and information booths at fairs, farmers markets, and other community events - Master Gardeners may create and staff educational exhibits at county fairs and other community events such as safety or educational fairs, community information events, festivals, farmers markets, home and garden shows, etc.
- Youth gardening programs - Master Gardeners may teach gardening to children in classrooms, demonstration gardens, 4-H groups, home school groups, etc.
- Garden based nutrition education – Master Gardeners may work with Food Sense and nutrition educators to teach about gardening to provide fresh fruits and vegetables in the diet.
- Educational articles for newsletters, newspapers, magazines or web based publications. Master Gardeners should have their work reviewed by Extension faculty or staff prior to submission for publication.

Examples of Program Support:

- Project leadership - Leadership opportunities may be available to manage or coordinate one of the projects in your county.
- Mentors – Mentors provide assistance to trainees during training and as they start their volunteer work.
- Office assistance - Counties may need assistance organizing Plant Clinic files, keeping bulletins up-to-date, creating or revising educational materials or recording volunteer service hours. Volunteer opportunities may include answering the phone, filing, computer data processing, inventorying, or other general office duties.
- Other support roles – Volunteers with experience in leadership, public relations, fundraising, computer science, public speaking, writing, graphic design, photography, carpentry, woodworking, etc. are invited to share their skills to support the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program and its activities.

Volunteers who join a local Master Gardener Foundation or Association may be required to donate volunteer hours to that organization. It is up to the WSU Extension Educator or Program Coordinator in that county how many of these hours may qualify toward certification or recertification hours.

Master Gardener Title

The correct title for volunteers from this program is “Washington State University (X) County Extension Master Gardeners.” The “WSU” abbreviation may be used.

The title of “WSU Master Gardener” is to be used only and exclusively by volunteers who have been certified in the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program and who are performing unpaid educational and public service as an active Master Gardener.

Specific Master Gardener designations change as volunteers move through the program.

- A **Master Gardener Trainee** refers to someone attending the basic training course for the first time.
- A **Master Gardener Intern** is a trainee who successfully completes training and starts initial service internship.
- A **Certified Master Gardener** is a volunteer who has completed county-specific service internship. This designation is usually referred to simply as “Master Gardener.”
- **Emeritus and Alumnus**

The titles “emeritus” and “alumnus” have applications parallel to their use within educational institutions in general. The title of “emeritus” applies to WSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers who are no longer able to fully meet the volunteer service requirement for annual recertification but are able to donate at least an hour of volunteer service per year to retain liability coverage and emeritus status. Emeritus status can only be granted by the local WSU Extension Master Gardener Program staff in consultation with any local Master Gardener organization. General guidelines for emeritus status include: 1) a minimum of 500 hours volunteer service or 2) 10 years of volunteer service or 3) exemplary service to the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program. Other county-specific privileges may also be available.

The title of alumnus applies to certified WSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers who are no longer participants in the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program. Unlike emeritus Master Gardeners, they have no annual service requirement and are not covered under WSU liability insurance.

Use of Master Gardener Title

WSU Extension Master Gardeners wear their name badges whenever they are engaged in Master Gardener activities. They should not wear or use the Master Gardener title to advertise a place of business, in advertisements, or to give endorsement of any product or place of business. (For example, “XYZ Specialty Nursery, Master Gardeners on staff” or “XYZ Product, recommended by Master Gardeners” or “Plant Doctor and Master Gardener.”)

Volunteers may list their WSU Extension Master Gardener training and experience as qualifications when applying for a job. However, once employed and while working for pay, you may not display credentials or give the appearance of being a WSU Extension Master Gardener at your place of business.

When serving at Master Gardener functions volunteers may not wear apparel imprinted with nursery or garden center logos, lawn and garden service, or other gardening business related logos.

WSU Extension Master Gardener Trademark & Logo

State Trademark

WSU owns the appellation “WSU Master Gardener.” The use of the WSU Extension Master Gardener Logo or appellation on letterhead, web sites or banners should include the “trademarked” symbol (™).

Official logo



This is the official Master Gardener Logo for use on posters, brochures, letterheads, apparel, etc. It cannot be changed from this format except to be used in black and white.

No other signatures, marks, logos, or representations may be used to represent the organization or its units and divisions without the express written consent of the Office of the Associate Vice President and Dean, Extension. For more information as well as the link to the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program Logo, go to <http://mastergardener.wsu.edu/logosnamebadgesapparel.html>.

Code of Conduct & Dress Code

Code of Conduct

As a WSU Extension Master Gardener, volunteers will:

- Represent Washington State University Extension with dignity and pride.
- Respect all persons with whom they interact as a WSU Extension Master Gardener (fellow volunteers, Extension or county personnel, and the general public).
- Conduct themselves in a courteous, respectful manner refraining from profanity, harassment, disruptive behavior or abuse of any kind (physical or verbal).
- Provide a positive role model when working with youth.
- Respect and follow WSU, county, and program Policies and Guidelines.
- Comply with Equal Employment Opportunity and nondiscrimination laws.

- Not make use of alcohol and other drugs in an illegal or inappropriate manner .
- Participate as team members within the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program.

Dress Code

Master Gardeners are representatives of WU Extension and should dress in an appropriate and professional manner. **Always wear your name badge when acting as a WSU volunteer.**

Clothes should be suitable for the activity or location. “Office casual” is appropriate for speaking engagements, indoor plant clinics and schools. Gardening work clothes are appropriate for demo gardens and some outdoor events.

Liability Coverage for Volunteers

WSU volunteers are unpaid agents of Washington State University. WSU, as a state agency, self-insures its general liability exposure. State statute provides that the state may provide a defense for any agent of WSU, including a volunteer, against whom claims are filed. However, individuals are **only** eligible for defense **if** they are acting **within the scope of their WSU duties and in good faith.**

To be acting in the official capacity of a WSU volunteer, you must be:

- **Currently enrolled in the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program,**
- **Acting in good faith and in accordance with WSU Extension Master Gardener guidelines,**
- **Engaged in activities which are planned, approved, and carried out through WSU Extension, and**
- **Reporting times and locations of WSU Extension Volunteer activities on a monthly basis.**

You are responsible for your own personal injury claims, except when reimbursement may be provided through the WSU volunteer program and the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I). L&I coverage includes hospital, physician’s care, prescriptions, ambulance, and other associated costs. Rehabilitation, loss of limb, or loss of income are not covered.

Foundations, Associations, and other Master Gardener organizations are valued partners and support groups for WSU Extension programs. However, they are legally independent of WSU Extension. Therefore activities sponsored exclusively by separate volunteer organizations (i.e. without the review and approval of local WSU Extension staff) are not covered by Washington State University’s liability insurance.

WSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers are not covered under the WSU insurance policy when participating in unapproved activities or activities sponsored by organizations without a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with WSU Extension. Support organizations without this MOA should make their own risk management arrangements, including the purchase of liability insurance.

Pest Management Recommendations

Master Gardeners are limited to making recommendations for home and garden pest management, and limited to home and garden products previously approved through the WSU pesticide approval process.

All commercial questions, such as commercial crop production, nursery management, public and commercial landscape maintenance and pesticide liability questions must be referred to a local WSU Extension Educator.

When asked for pest management recommendations, WSU Extension Master Gardeners are required to provide an Integrated Pest Management approach (utilizing cultural, mechanical, biological and/or chemical). For recommendations that include the use of chemicals (e.g. insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides, including organic products) WSU Extension Master Gardeners must follow published home and garden recommendations in either current WSU publications or other WSU approved materials. <http://mastergardener.wsu.edu/clinicrefmaterials.html>

Following these recommendations guidelines is essential for compliance with WSU liability coverage.

WSU will assume liability for the pest management recommendations of Master Gardeners only if they follow published WSU approved recommendations for home and garden use. Non-chemical pest management recommendations can be made from specifically approved non-WSU publications. A list of non-WSU approved references is updated each year.

Always use tact and give constructive advice when giving pest management recommendations. If you encounter opinions or procedures with which you disagree, begin your advice by saying, “this will be more effective, give better results, etc.” without being insulting to the person receiving your suggestions. Best results come from guiding people in their decisions.

Questions You Shouldn't Answer

Commercial questions. If the inquiry applies to any commercial or business situation (nurseries, growers, spray services, landscapers), refer these questions to a local Extension Educator.

Legal questions. If the situation is one in which someone seeks a legal opinion, such as a case in which an expert witness may be needed, WSU Extension Master Gardeners cannot handle these questions. An appropriate response may be, “As WSU Volunteers, we give general home horticulture information. For your questions, you may wish to consult a qualified attorney.”

Product or service endorsements. Master Gardeners do not endorse any particular product, business, or service. There may be occasions when a product is mentioned by brand-name (Orthene, for instance, is seldom referred to by its chemical name, acephate.) Master Gardeners may also mention a product by its chemical name, such as glyphosate, and then mention products from several companies—Roundup, Kleenup—to clarify your recommendation. This does not imply endorsement.

Reimbursement for Expenses

When giving a presentation for other groups it is permissible to accept honoraria, or payment to your local Master Gardener Program. Volunteers may ask for reimbursement of travel costs or supplies if the supplies are used in projects that the audience takes with them. However, it is inappropriate to accept speaking engagements for personal pay while using the title of WSU Master Gardener.

WSU Extension Master Gardeners may teach community education classes for which a fee is charged when this fee covers actual class expenses, or, is applied fully to the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program. (See Chapter Five, Fundraising by Master Gardener)

When a volunteer ceases active participation in the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program, the volunteer may not accept compensation for teaching or giving presentations using the title of WSU Extension Master Gardener. Former Volunteers may charge for their services or accept reimbursements as long as they do not use the title of WSU Extension Master Gardener.

Termination of Volunteer Services

As a representative of WSU, Extension volunteers have agreed to abide by its policies and expectations. If behavior with the public, colleagues, or supervisors is not acceptable or in the best interest of WSU Extension, the MG program or clientele, a volunteer may be reprimanded or asked to leave the program.

Every attempt will be made to correct disqualifying behavior including reviewing Master Gardener Policies and Procedures, or reassignment to another activity. If a volunteer's inappropriate actions continue, the volunteer will be removed from the program after being contacted personally and receiving written notice outlining reason for removal and the date of removal from the program.

Withdrawal or Leave of Absence

To cease active participation or withdraw from the program, volunteers must notify the Program Coordinator in writing. After withdrawal, volunteers may not represent themselves as WSU Master Gardeners or wear their name badge. However, WSU Extension Master Gardeners with emeritus or alumnus status may represent themselves as WSU Extension Master Gardener emeritus or alumnus. (See chapter 3)

WSU Extension Master Gardeners may submit a written request for a leave of absence for a period of no longer than one year and remain certified upon return to active participation. If volunteers are gone for longer than a year, they need to reapply to their local Extension Master Gardener Program.

Recertification Guidelines for Returning After a Leave of Absence for More Than One Year

To maintain program quality, WSU Extension Master Gardeners must be trained in both current and regionally relevant home horticulture information. For this reason, automatic recertification is not offered.

Determination of your status is made by local WSU Extension Program Coordinators. Several options follow:

- Pre-enrollment in the program and completion the basic training course. Payment of all relevant training fees and fulfillment of the standard requirements for certification may be required.
- Re-admission to the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program if volunteer:
 - completed the WSU Extension Master Gardener Basic Training course and left the program in good standing,
 - completes an orientation session with the WSU Extension Educator and/or the Program Coordinator,
 - reads, understands, and signs the current “WSU Master Gardener Pest Management Recommendation Agreement,” and
 - completes the WSU Extension Master Gardener Basic Training final exam (open book) and receives a passing grade.

Chapter 5: Fundraising by Master Gardeners for Program Support

Fundraising by Master Gardeners

There are multiple ways to generate revenue for Master Gardener programs, and there are specific rules and laws that govern how funds can be deposited and disbursed. This document explains what MG program coordinators, volunteers, and foundation representatives need to know to ensure that federal and Washington State regulations are followed when volunteers raise money or charge fees for program support.

Often donors assume that their donations to Master Gardeners are tax-exempt. However, specific legal requirements must be in place for this to be true. Following these regulations will ensure that donors' gifts are tax deductible and that they are properly stewarded.

Types of Fundraising and Revenue Generation

- Annual plant sales, raffles or auctions
- Fees for services such as classes, workshops, tours, etc
- Sales of books, publications, and program related products such as compost bins, at Master Gardener activities
- Acceptance of gifts and donations to the state or local MG program

Master Gardener Volunteers may raise money for program support if they follow approved methods described here when accepting, depositing and using funds. *In no case should money be deposited into an individual's personal banking account.*

Proper Handling of Funds Raised to Support Master Gardener Activities

Funds for Master Gardener Program support may be handled through Master Gardener non-profit associations or through the WSU Foundation account in each county.

1. Master Gardener associations are established to financially support the Master Gardener program within each county or statewide. These associations are independent organizations (not part of WSU) that operate under memoranda of agreement (MOA) with Washington State University Extension. Fundraising activities of these associations may include receipt of cash or in-kind donations. The following is a summary of the different categories of current Master Gardener associations in Washington State. Each has restrictions as to how or if it can receive tax-exempt donations.
 - a. Non-Profit Corporation – This simply means that the association is registered with the Secretary of State as a non-profit. Associations that are non-profit corporations can raise funds in support of the Master Gardener program, manage funds through a bank account held by the association, and distribute funding for appropriate purposes, however the association may not solicit or receive tax-exempt donations unless it is a Charter Chapter of the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State (see b) or an Independent 501 (c)(3) Charitable Organization or Foundation (see c). If an association accepts tax-exempt donations in a manner other than those listed below, then it has most likely violated federal laws and/or regulations.

- b. **Charter Chapters (also known as Dependent Chapters) of the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State (MGFWS)** – Associations that are “charter or dependent chapters” of the MG Foundation of Washington State can receive tax-exempt gifts under the MGFWS’s 501(c)(3) status. These chapters must be approved by the MGFWS every three years in accordance with Article III, Section 3 of the by-laws of the MGFWS. Checks should be made payable to the MGFWS and deposited into an account held by the MGFWS. Fund deposits and disbursements are handled by the MGFWS. Contact the MGFWS at <http://mastergardener.wsu.edu/mgfws/index.html> for procedures.
 - c. **Independent 501 (c) (3) Charitable Organization/Foundation** – Any Master Gardener association that has been designated by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501 (c)(3) charitable organization or foundation can receive funds and tax-exempt gifts and deposit these into an account held by the association. Checks must be made payable to the association and not to WSU. Note that establishing this type of organization has the highest cost and administrative burden. There must be a Board of Directors, by-laws and articles of incorporation, and significant annual reporting to the IRS.
- 2. WSU Foundation**– Each county with a MG program has an account located at the WSU Foundation called the “XYZ” County MG Development Fund. (As of 2008, some counties are using them and some are not.) All Master Gardener Volunteers can raise money and deposit funds or tax exempt gifts into their County’s MG Development Fund. Checks must be made out to the WSU Foundation and noted for support of the local County Extension MG Program. No independent association or foundation is necessary to administer these accounts. Work with your WSU Extension Director’s office for using these accounts (informally referred to as 17A accounts.)

Rules for Receipt of Tax Deductible Donations

To ensure that donors’ gifts are tax deductible and that they are properly stewarded, funds must be receipted and deposited appropriately.

- 1. No gift receipts can be issued by any Master Gardener Association for tax purposes unless the funds will be processed through the local registered 501 (c)(3) organization, the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State, or through the WSU Foundation to the appropriate county fund. It is further recommended that the association print this on receipts issued to the donor. All donations should be followed by issuance of a receipt.
- 2. Funds must be deposited appropriately. Funds should NEVER be deposited into an account held by an individual, by the local Extension Office into an account held by an organization other than the county Master Gardener association. If donations are made to a county Master Gardener association, the association must be a registered Washington non-profit corporation. And as mentioned previously, if the gift is to be tax deductible, the gift must be deposited into an account held by a registered 501(c)(3) organization. This can be a county Master Gardener association (if it is appropriately registered as a 501(c)(3)), the Master Gardener Foundation of

Washington State (if the local chapter is a charter/dependent chapter of the MGFWS), or the WSU Foundation with a notation to support the local County MG Program .

Why It's Important to Properly Receive and Acknowledge Private Support to the Master Gardener Program

Private support of programs like Master Gardeners is increasingly making the difference between “good” and “great.” There are several significant reasons that gifts to the MG program are managed in one of the three different methods outlined in this document:

1. Ensure compliance with State, Federal and IRS Guidelines regarding Gifts - Although making a gift to receive a tax benefit isn't the primary reason people give to a program, it is an important benefit of their investment. By making the gift through a recognized 501 (c)(3) organization, we can assure our supporters that their gift will be tax deductible
2. Letting our donors know how their funds will be used - It's important to recognize this support through proper “stewardship” or giving thanks for the generosity of our donors. In addition to a gift receipt, the organizations detailed in this policy also have policies in place so that a formal thank you is issued to the donor
3. Keeping track of private support to the Master Gardener program – as the program matures other funding opportunities, such as grants from other foundations, are increasing possibilities. Often these outside funding agencies look at how an organization is supported through the number of donors and the amount of giving. Keeping an accurate record of this support will help the Master Gardener Program leverage additional funds to the program.

Chapter 6: Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State & Local Master Gardener Associations

Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State (MGFWS)

The flagship Master Gardener organization in Washington is the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State. WSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers are encouraged to visit their web site, <http://mastergardener.wsu.edu/mgfws>, for a more complete view of the organization and related resources.

Mission Statement of the MGFWS

“The mission of the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State is to help WSU Extension Master Gardener Programs ‘grow’ better communities through financial support, communication, education, and advocacy.”

Purpose of the MGFWS

The purpose of MGFWS is educational and charitable in furtherance of the Washington State University Master Gardener Program, without the inclusion of any purpose or intention of carrying on any business, trade, avocation or profession for profit.

The following purposes are specifically stated in the MGFWS Articles of Incorporation:

- To enhance and supplement the efforts of the Washington State University Master Gardener Program and thereby to provide education and information on horticulture to the citizens of the State of Washington.
- To raise funds to be used to supplement and enhance the WSU Master Gardener Program.
- To facilitate an exchange of ideas and information between individual chapters and affiliate organizations of this corporation through periodic newsletters and seminars.
- To inform and educate the citizens and decision makers of our State about the value of the Master Gardener Program.

The Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State interacts with WSU Extension through an active MOA as it provides support to the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program.

The Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State participates in fund-raising and resource acquisition to support the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program and assists other Master Gardener organizations.

The Role of Local Master Gardener Organization

Volunteers in some counties have formed Master Gardener (MG) organizations called Foundations or Associations to work in partnership with WSU Extension to support the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program. MG organizations may be formal (incorporated with the State of Washington) or informal (unincorporated). While the ultimate responsibility for the WSU Extension Master Gardener Program rests with the WSU Extension faculty and staff in each county, these support organizations are vital team players, providing much needed financial and delegated managerial support.

The specific role and responsibility of each MG organization to the local WSU Extension Master Gardener Program is described in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between that organization and WSU Extension in each county. This guiding document is essential for the clear leadership of WSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers and for compliance with state ethics laws.

Note: Membership in a Master Gardener organization is NOT required for program participations. Volunteers who feel they have been pressured into joining a Master Gardener organization should contact their county Program Coordinator or the State Master Gardener Program Leader.

Memorandum of Agreement

WSU Extension and the Master Gardener organizations work closely on many aspects of the program. **To strengthen that relationship and to comply with state ethics laws, each Master Gardener organization works with the local WSU Extension office to complete a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).** This document defines the major responsibilities between the two groups. Responsibility for completion of the document rests with the WSU Extension County Director and the Board of Directors of county MG organization. Sample templates and instructions are available online at the WSU Extension Master Gardener web site, <http://mastergardener.wsu.edu>.

WSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers are encouraged to review a copy of the MOA pertinent to their program. A copy can be obtained from the county WSU Extension office or the local MG organization.

Appendix 1:

WSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Position Description

WSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Position Description

Title WSU Master Gardener Volunteer

Purpose To provide public education in gardening and environmental stewardship based on researched-based information from WSU Extension and other universities to address such critical issues as enhancing natural resources and environmental stewardship, sustaining vibrant communities, and improving health and wellness of residents of Washington.

Nature & Scope WSU Master Gardener Volunteers make it possible for Extension faculty and staff to reach more people with horticulture programs and home gardening information than would be possible without them.

Trained and certified WSU Master Gardener Volunteers provide educational programs, free advice and answers to questions on home gardening and landscape maintenance, pest management, composting, and related topics. This is accomplished through various formal and informal activities, including plant clinics, telephone or personal contacts, demonstrations, classes, written material, school programs, demonstration gardens, public meeting, tours, etc.

Requirements Be able to participate fully in the training program provided for WSU Master Gardener Volunteers.
Be willing and able to return a county-specific number of public educational service hours within a predetermined timeframe.
Be willing to follow the WSU Master Gardener policies and procedure, including record keeping requirements and responding to reasonable requests for volunteer service.
Be willing to abide by WSU Extension's Pest Management Recommendation Agreement, giving clients a range of possible options, including cultural, mechanical, biological, and chemical controls.
Be able to communicate effectively with the public by telephone, personal contact, group contact, or through written language.
Have knowledge of and experience or skills in basic gardening or other horticulture related areas.
Be able to work with adults and/or youth, and be willing to share home gardening information with others.

Supervision The Extension staff in charge of the county WSU Master Gardener Program oversees and coordinates the activities of Master Gardener Volunteers. In some locations, Master Gardener organizations with an official relationships with WSU Extension assist county staff in program administration.